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TAGS: [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [NATO](#) [GM](#)

SUBJECT: GERMAN DEPUTY NSA BELIEVES TIMING COULD UNDERMINE
MD EFFORTS AT NATO SUMMIT

Classified By: Political M/C George Glass for reasons 1.4 (b/d)

¶1. (C) Begin Summary. During a February 12 meeting with U/S Defense Flournoy, German Deputy National Security Advisor Rolf Nickel said he was doubtful that allies could reach agreement on the issue of territorial defense in time to make a final decision at the NATO Summit in Lisbon. Specifically, he pointed to French concerns and noted that feasibility studies on missile defense would still be in the works by the time of the summit. On the removal of tactical nuclear weapons in Germany -- advocated by the German MFA -- Nickel emphasized that it should be a NATO decision and agreed that the U.S. should not shoulder the entire burden of assuring extended deterrence in Europe. Nickel believed the discussions toward achieving Iran sanctions were moving in the right direction -- though he was skeptical that sanctions would change Tehran's behaviour. He also lauded Chancellor Merkel's efforts to boost German troop contributions to Afghanistan despite public opposition. End summary.

Afghanistan

¶2. (C) Nickel noted that additional German troops should arrive in Afghanistan during the summer -- assuming the Bundestag approves the troop ceiling increase on February 26, as expected. He also stressed that the troop increase had been a heavy lift for Chancellor Merkel given broad public opposition. However, Nickel emphasized that there was now a renewed sense of determination within the German government to succeed in Afghanistan. Beyond an additional 850 troops (including 350 held in reserve), Nickel underscored Germany's aid contributions of about USD 2 billion per year.

¶3. (C) In response to U/S Flournoy's inquiries, Nickel explained that the 350 reserve troops would be used for contingency operations -- such as to support Afghan elections. Flournoy stressed that the allies now had the right strategy and leadership on the ground and were approaching the necessary level of resources. However, she said there was still a shortfall of about 2000 institutional trainers for Afghan security forces.

NATO Reform and Strategic Concept

¶4. (C) Nickel underscored that the deep global financial crisis -- felt acutely by NATO nations -- would spur the alliance to institute reforms and better set priorities. He recognized the value of having the new strategic concept steer the way forward on NATO reforms. However, Nickel emphasized that these efforts were on parallel tracks such that it would prove difficult to sequence the two -- particularly given the tight timeframes at play. He added that Germany was on board with SYG Rasmussen's package deal for priorities. With regard to drafting of the strategic concept, Nickel stressed the need to maximize at least the

"perceived" inclusion by member nations.

Russia, Missile Defense and Lisbon Summit

15. (C) Nikel pointed to some aspects of Russia's European security proposals as potential kick-off points for discussion -- for example, talks on the definition of "substantial forces" as a way to re-start the CFE dialogue. However, he stressed that Moscow's proposals also included significant non-starter topics -- such as Russian "spheres of influence" and a de facto veto over European security issues.

Nikel noted that there was simply no appetite in Berlin to explore these European redlines. Nevertheless, Nikel said that the allies needed to work on confidence-building with Russia.

16. (C) Flournoy flagged missile defense as an opportunity for engagement with Russia and pressed for an endorsement of territorial defense during the NATO summit in Lisbon. However, Nikel was doubtful that the allies could reach a final decision by Lisbon because of ongoing French concerns and the fact that feasibility studies on missile defense would still be in progress. He further stressed that NATO MD should meet four criteria: 1) cover all of NATO territory; 2) be viable; 3) not antagonize Russia; and 4) fit into a broader arms control architecture. For his part, Nikel believed a NATO MD system could check all of these boxes.

Tactical Nuclear Weapons in Europe

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17. (C) On the removal of tactical nuclear weapons from Germany -- as advocated by the German MFA -- Flournoy stressed that this must be an alliance decision and emphasized that the upcoming U.S. Nuclear Posture Review would not make any judgement on the issue. She noted that the USG was open to a discussion about how NATO's security architecture should be structured, while still underscoring the need to maintain extended deterrence. However, Flournoy expressed concern about German FM Westerwelle's public comments against tactical nuclear weapons as well as Germany's planned divestment of the dual-capable aircraft -- aircraft needed to remain a part of NATO's extended deterrence architecture. She further stressed that it would be unhealthy for the alliance to have the U.S. as sole underwriter of NATO's nuclear deterrent.

18. (C) Nikel agreed that the U.S. should not shoulder the entire burden for NATO's nuclear deterrent. Furthermore, he underscored that several preconditions -- such as a post-START agreement, successful NPT Review Conference, and relevant considerations from Russia -- should play a role in moving forward with discussions on NATO tactical nuclear weapons. Above all, Nikel stressed that decisions on tactical nuclear weapons in Europe must be made at NATO and reassured U/S Flournoy that the German Chancellery was clear on this point.

Iran sanctions

19. (C) On Iran, Nikel believed it clear that officials in Tehran would not respond to engagement and agreed it was time to pursue the pressure track. He reiterated the need to sequence the approach to sanctions -- starting with efforts at the UN. However, Nikel had the clear feeling that national efforts would also be needed -- which, for Germany, would require an EU decision. He hoped to see movement at the EU by the end of the month, but was not sure there was enough time to reach agreement by then. Nikel flagged the

March 25 European Council meeting as another opportunity and underscored that any UN text could influence the parameters of an EU decision. He also noted that Chancellor Merkel had already begun reaching out to non-permanent UNSC members to prepare the way forward.

[¶](#)10. (U) This cable was cleared by U/S Flournoy.
Murphy